

F

129
M214

THE

STORY

of

MANHATTAN
BY
B.

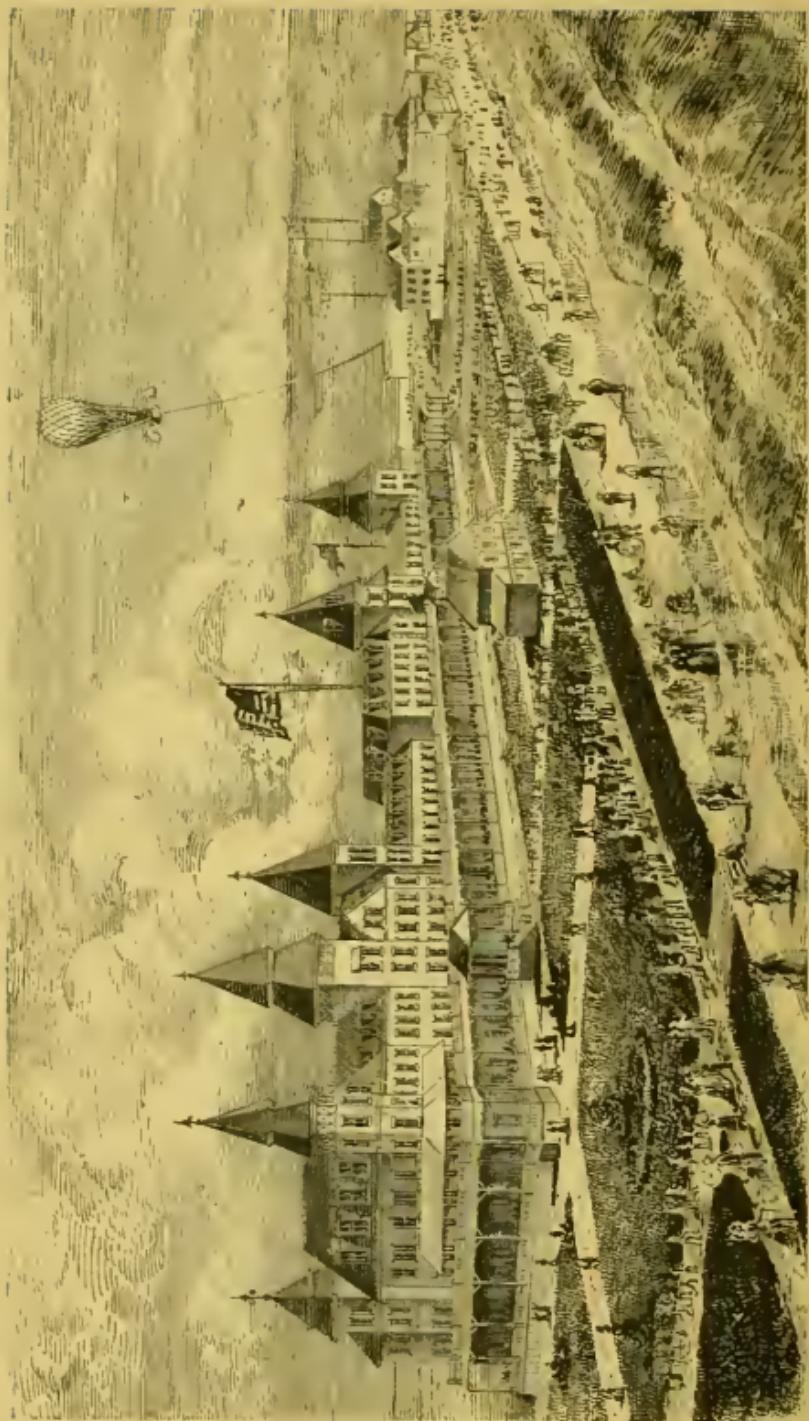


Glass F129

Book 124

THE STORY OF MANHATTAN BEACH.

Copyright, 1879.



THE STORY
OF
MANHATTAN BEACH;
A Practical and Picturesque Delineation
OF
ITS HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND ATTRACTIONS,

DESIGNED TO SHOW THE PLEASURE-SEEKER
HOW TO SPEND A DAY OR A LONGER PERIOD AT THE SEA-SIDE
WITH THE GREATEST ADVANTAGE,

Edwards
ALSO, AN ACCOUNT OF

CONEY ISLAND

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES, WITH MANY INTERESTING FACTS CONCERNING
ITS TRANSFORMATION FROM A SAND-DESERT INTO A FASHION-
ABLE RESORT, AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE WAYS
TO REACH IT BY LAND AND WATER.

NEW-YORK:
FRANCIS HART & Co., PRINTERS AND STATIONERS, 63 AND 65 MURRAY ST.
1879.



F₂₉
M2D4

INTRODUCTION.

*I*T is believed that of the thousands who daily seek recreation at Manhattan Beach very few are aware of the varied historical interest which attaches to it, and the following pages have been written to elucidate not merely the events attending its development, but also its numerous charms and the unsurpassed facilities it affords for holidays on the ocean. As compactly as possible, the writer has endeavored to present much material that will be new to even the habitues of the Beach, and his principal design has been to inform the reader of the matters which cannot fail to enhance the pleasure of a visit to this now famous watering-place.



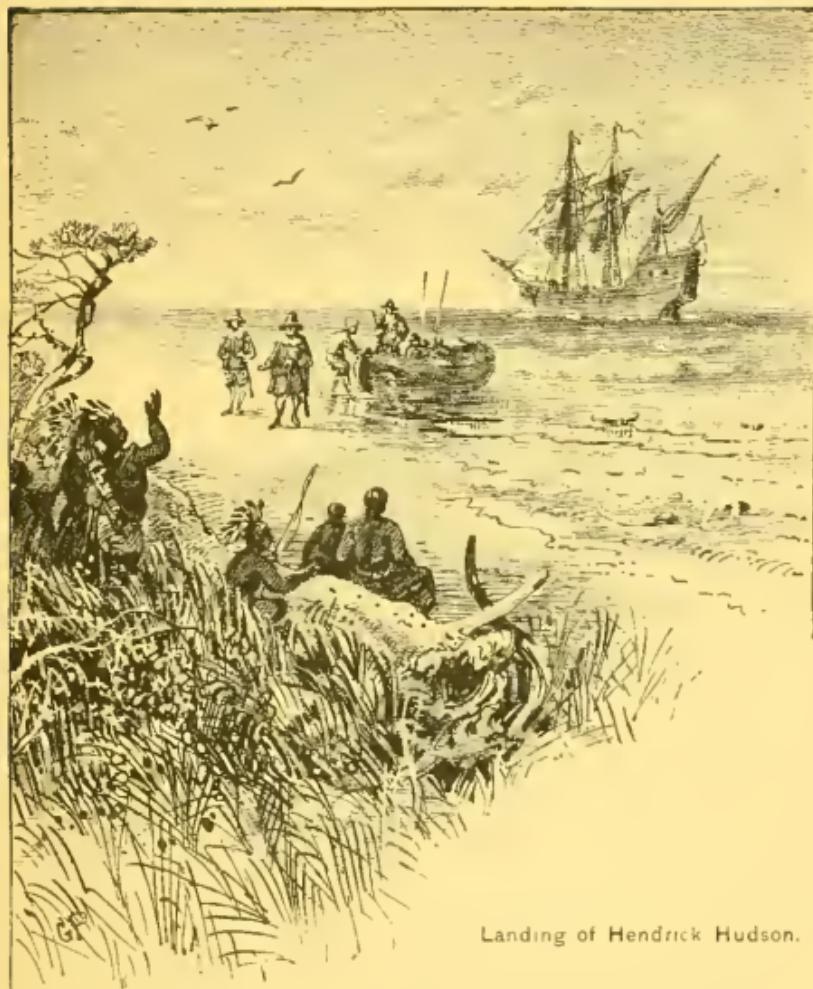
MANHATTAN BEACH.

WITHIN easy distance of the metropolis and almost directly south of it, lies a long low spit of silvery white sand which is separated from Long Island by a narrow creek; it is beyond the portals of the upper bay, and the water that breaks in ermine surf along its shore is the pungent and undiluted brine of the Atlantic; the ripples are homogeneous with those that play in the fierce heat of Africa, and the vast basin reaching outward has no nearer boundary than the Eastern hemisphere.

One morning last Autumn, some Americans who had been absent from their country for

several years, stood on the deck of an inward bound steamer, and gazed at this reach of sand as their vessel veered into the great ship channel; the white surf made the sand seem golden; the sunshine was all-pervading, and a variety of buildings flying bunting and having a holiday aspect, led toward the eastern end to a cluster of palace-like structures which were quite new to the Americans. "That," said one of the officers, indicating the picturesque cluster with a sweep of his hand,—"that is Manhattan Beach," and it was a fact that, in the absence of the tourists, this handsome watering-place had sprung out of a region previously unoccupied and uninviting.

About two hundred and seventy years ago (April, 1609), Hendrick Hudson, having sailed from Amsterdam in search of a western path to the East Indies, stood off the same shore. His little vessel, the *Halve Maene*, had for five months buffeted the storms, and been driven from Greenland to the Carolinas, when, upon the 3d of September, he sighted "three great rivers," one of which was probably the Hudson, the other Raritan Bay, and the third Rockaway Inlet. On the day following, according to his journal, he sent a number of his men ashore in a boat, "who caught ten great mullet and a ray as great as four men could haul into the



Landing of Hendrick Hudson.

ship." They found large numbers of plum-trees loaded with fruit and surrounded by luxuriant grape-vines. The natives who came to meet them were amazed at the size of their ship, and vastly interested in their dress, language and color. They had no houses, but slept with the sky for a counterpane, on mats made of

bushes and leaves. They were clothed in the skins of elk, foxes and other wild animals, and armed with bows and arrows. Now if it were necessary to establish a precedent for visitors to Manhattan Beach, we could find it in the valorous old explorer who sought the Orient through the Hudson River.

Hudson's intercourse with the Indians was amicable in the beginning; they came on board his ship and traded tobacco, maize and fruit for knives and beads; but on the third day, whilst some of the sailors were ashore, the savages—probably not without provocation—attacked them. John Coleman was killed by an arrow wound in the throat, and two others were wounded. This disaster gave the name to a neighboring point, which perpetuates Coleman's memory; and although the Indians were disposed to resume their peaceful relations with Hudson afterward, he distrusted them, and moved to an anchorage in Gravesend Bay, which is bounded on the south by the western extremity of the sand-spit which lies so white in the sunshine.

Manhattan Beach is the name of modern times given to the eastern end, and the whole reach is called Coney Island, the derivation of which nomenclature is ascribed to various sources: perhaps it came from an early Dutch

settler named Coneynen; perhaps from the ill-fated Coleman, or perhaps from the numbers of rabbits or conies which populated the island; the latter origin seems most likely, and at all events the name has attached to it since 1644.

The island extends some five miles from east to west, with an average width of not more than half a mile, and is about eleven miles directly south of the city of New-York. The western end, as we have said, forms Gravesend Bay and projects toward the Narrows, and the eastern end is Manhattan Beach, which has a sea frontage of nearly two and a half miles, facing the south.

When Hudson landed, the shore was hilly and the water-line was probably two or three miles further seaward than it now is. Almost in the memory of living men grass was abundant on a part of the beach now invisible under the oscillations of the sea, and the growth of cedars afforded the inhabitants of the mainland a sufficiency of fuel for their winter fires. The soil is alluvial, except a small tract of tertiary, and the creek that separates it from Long Island winds through a marsh of vivid green, in which numerous wild birds are found.

In approaching the island the passenger traverses a region of deep and varied historic interest. Opposite and on the mainland is

the old town of Gravesend, which was settled in 1635, by a few English colonists, including a number of Quakers who had been expelled from the neighborhood of Boston, and it is probable that the name given to this settlement was brought from the old town near the mouth of the Thames, in England. Among the Quakers was a woman of rank, education and wealth,—the Lady Deborah Moody,—whose influence on the settlement was both powerful and beneficent. When the town was laid off in squares and inclosed by a stockade, Lady Moody and her companions found that, although liberty of conscience had been guaranteed them, a spirit of persecution was rife among the surrounding settlers, and she was arraigned by the authorities of New Amsterdam for repudiating infant baptism as an ordinance of God. Her defence was so eloquent, however, that she escaped conviction, and she then applied herself to obtain the liberation of her companions, who were charged with similar “frightful heresies.” Until her death in 1659, this gifted woman exercised not only great influence in the affairs of the Colony, but also exerted herself for the elevation and improvement of those who had persecuted her.

When the English settled Gravesend, they were required to take an oath of allegiance to

the Dutch authorities, but they were never thoroughly loyal, and in the frequent controversies between the Dutch and English as to the sovereignty of Long Island, they espoused the cause of their native country, suffering much from the tyranny of the authorities in consequence. In 1655, they openly disavowed the Dutch, and announced themselves as subjects of Great Britain. Five years later, a force of eighty Englishmen rode into the town, declared that it belonged to the king, deposed the magistrates, and appointed new ones.

The first town meeting was held in 1646, when every inhabitant was ordered to help in building a fence to inclose a common field of corn, and a herdsman was appointed to look after the cattle running at large. A court-house was built in 1668, and the following was one of the earliest judgments recorded :

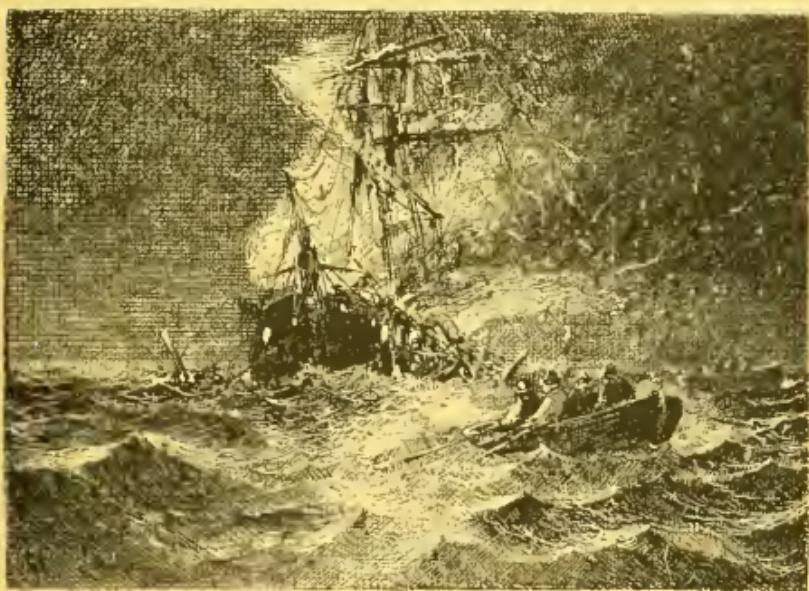
“Whereas, during this Court of Sessions, there hath been several misdemeanors committed in contempt of authority in this town of Gravesend, by one pulling down the fences, throwing down the stocks, and such crimes; the Court also finds there was no watch in the town, which might have prevented it; and being the offenders cannot be discovered, it is ordered that the town stand fine in five

pounds, till they have made a discovery of the offenders."

In 1669, a ship was built, measuring about seventy tons, and during the war of Independence, an English corvette of twenty guns was captured off Coney Island. Gravesend Bay was also the scene of General Howe's landing as he removed his forces from Staten Island to Long Island, previous to the battle on the Heights. He compelled the inhabitants to work on the fortifications, and to guide his foraging parties; he took possession of their houses, and quartered his soldiers with them. At the same time, he guaranteed their personal security, and ordered them to attend at his head-quarters, where certificates were issued to them, and each man was ordered to fasten a piece of red flannel to his hat. The demand for fabrics of this sanguinary color was so great in consequence, that the women tore up their flannel petticoats to meet it, and with this badge of servitude over their brows, the citizens of Gravesend whispered threats of vengeance among themselves. The disastrous battle of Long Island, in which Howe was so successful, deferred the realization of their schemes, however, and those who were unwilling or unable to effect an escape to the American lines had to bear much derision from the

bluff, hard-drinking, and hard-swear ing soldiers of the King.

The capture of the corvette previously referred to was accomplished in this wise : She anchored late one night off Coney Island, whence she was bound to Halifax, and a gallant old whaler named Huyler, smarting per-



Burning of Corvette off Coney Island.

haps under the wrongs suffered at the hands of the red-coats, conceived the bold idea of seizing and destroying her. A few trusty friends co-operated with him in the exploit ; they muffled their oars, and rowed under the stern of the ship ; no watch was on deck, and the officers could be seen through the cabin

windows playing a game of cards. A second boat stood some distance behind the first, and, at a signal, one crew boarded the corvette over the port side and the other over the starboard. Both the officers and men were completely surprised. They were secured and lowered into the boats, and the corvette was then set on fire. The captors pulled over toward the Jersey shore with their prisoners, and the captain of the corvette is said to have wept bitterly—whether from the mellowing effects of wine or chagrin is not known. “To be surprised and taken by two d——d egg-shells is too bad,” he complained. He praised the gallant enterprise of Huyler, and told him that there were forty thousand dollars on board the ship that was now illuminating the whole bay with its flames; but the treasure was not secured.

Near Gravesend is the town of New Utrecht, which is also of historic interest. It was settled in 1654 by about twenty families from Holland, who erected a block-house for their protection from Indians, robbers and pirates, and it is now the site of many pretty villas. It includes Fort Hamilton, which commands the entrance to New-York harbor. Near Fort Hamilton stands insular Fort Lafayette, in which many political prisoners were confined during the

civil war, and on the opposite shore of Staten Island are Fort Richmond and Fort Wadsworth, which complete an almost impregnable system of fortifications. The Indian name of the neighborhood around Fort Hamilton was Nyack, and it was here that Colonel Richard Nichols, afterward Governor of New-York, wrote to Governor Stuyvesant, demanding the surrender of the New Netherlands. Here also, off Fort Hamilton, the British anchored thirty-seven men-of-war and four hundred transports, carrying twenty-seven thousand soldiers, previous to the battle of Long Island.



CHAPTER II.



WHILE the new republic was growing into one of the first powers in the world, and the city on Manhattan Island was attaining proportions that made it a compeer of Paris and London, the beach on which Hudson landed two hundred and seventy years ago was utterly neglected; the Indians disappeared, and the wind and sea leveled its high conformation, and swept away the cedars and grape-vines. Newport, Atlantic City, Long Branch, Cape May, and a score of other water-

ing-places, sprang into existence, and were resorted to by the scented and furbelowed crowds of the fashionable world. But except the natural changes on its surface that we have mentioned, Coney Island met with no other mutations than the heat of summer and the storms of winter. It presented the same aspect to the mariner of a century ago that it did to the commander of the ocean steamer of modern times. It was low, white, and desolate. Occasionally a vessel went ashore on the beach, and the inhabitants of the mainland flocked over with succor. A few "clam-mers" and oystermen lived in huts along the creek separating it from the mainland, and now and then a sportsman came in winter after game. These were the only visitors or residents the island had, and while it was within eleven miles of the throbbing city, it was as isolated as the Labrador.

So it remained until a comparatively recent period, when its convenience and natural excellence as a sea-side resort began in a measure to be recognized. A few scattered restaurants, "pavilions" and bath-houses were erected midway between the western end and the present site of "Cable's" hotel. Communication with the city was established by a line of horse-cars from Brooklyn, and a line of

steamers from East and North River landings. A few years later saw the opening of a single-track railway from Greenwood. As the horse-cars took about three hours to make the journey, and were started only at long intervals, while the steamers were of inferior character, and the railway trains were dispatched not oftener than once an hour, the influx of visitors did not overtax the limited accommodations provided for them. Those whose patience was sufficient to endure the tedium of the journey, found a beach, which either for bathing purposes or promenade could not be surpassed. It was firm, clean, and so inclined, that while the sea always formed a surf, the waves were not too boisterous. There were no quicksands, and no shells to wound the feet, and the air was pure and exhilarating. But though it was naturally superior to Long Branch, an objectionable class of visitors took possession of it, and their presence gave it a reputation which excluded the more desirable element. It is no exaggeration to say that a man with respect for himself, much less a woman or child, could not travel by the steamers. Scenes of riot and violence were of frequent occurrence on board.

The writer distinctly remembers a visit paid by him to the island some seven years ago.

The sail down the bay was made in an antiquated steamer. At the landing there was a barn-like dining-room, with a still more barn-like bar-room attached; chops, steaks, and chowder, of a very inferior quality, were purveyed at the prices of fashionable city restaurants, and, if in addition to refreshments the visitor desired a bath, he was directed to a dilapidated shanty, where twenty-five cents were charged for a bathing-suit, and a similar sum for the deposit of his purse or watch. "Three-card monte" swindlers had their tables along the beach, and they plied their trade with considerable success. At the end of a vacuous day the visitor returned to the city, lucky if he escaped robbery or insult, and he did not usually repeat his visit.

Between 1874 and 1876, some improvements were made, and a better class of people appeared disposed to use their influence in making one of the finest beaches in the world available. New steamers were put on the water route, and the hotel accommodations were extended. But the island ranked far below the neighboring Long Branch, or even Rockaway, and what was actually the best part of the beach was a *terra incognita* which the most venturesome pedestrians seldom explored. "How obvious it was that here could be

developed a sea-side resort absolutely unequaled in attractions and in the means of access,—a sea-side resort that would become more popular than Long Branch, Rockaway or Newport!" the visionary of to-day proclaims, as he gazes upon what has been accomplished. How obvious also was it that in the vapor which James Watt saw issuing from his mother's tea-kettle reposed the power which propels "Great Easterns" and draws trains of palace-cars across a continent; that a cord of gutta percha, hemp and wire, could convey messages around the world in twenty minutes, as *Puck* prophetically hath it; that Union Square would one day be the center of New-York,—how obvious in the retrospect, and yet the theories of Watt were laughed at; the projectors of the Atlantic cable sought for supporters to their enterprise in vain, and the most sagacious Knickerbocker who sauntered after dinner as far as the City Hall, and gazed on the waste land beyond, probably thought it as poor an investment as he could possibly make. A Columbus or a Fulton crystallizes an idea which has found lodgment in the brains of thousands who could never formulate it, and when it is expressed these thousands exclaim: "How true—how often we have felt it!" But it is the genius of prophetic intuition that

makes the successful engineer, the successful inventor, and the successful capitalist,—the capacity to foresee that which everybody lightly says, when the object has been attained, might have been foreseen by an infant.

This digression leads to the second discovery of Coney Island, which was still more eventful than the first discovery by Hendrick Hudson.

A New-York banker had an invalid child for whom sea-air was prescribed by the physicians as a cure, and as his business compelled his daily presence in the city, he decided to locate his family on Coney Island, whither he went with his horses and carriages, finding quarters in the only family hotel available there previous to 1874. The child improved rapidly, and the father perceived that in ignored, ill-reputed Coney Island were all the requisites of a most desirable sea-side resort. Mr. Austin Corbin—such was the banker's name—did not make any pretence to the possession of extraordinary shrewdness in deciding that he had discovered the site of a watering-place that would reveal undreamed-of pleasures to the over-worked New-Yorkers. He saw that with the elimination of the old class of visitors and the introduction of suitable accommodations for a better class, the island might take the place intended for it by nature. More than this, he

carefully explored the unfrequented eastern half of the island, and found there advantages which the other half did not possess,—a stretch of beach as firm as asphalt, which was washed by the sea on both sides; which would afford still-water as well as surf bathing, besides boating and fishing; and which, finally, was not merely at the sea-side, but practically *at sea*. If the reader will consult a map, he will find that for nearly half its length the island is bounded on the north by an ample bay, which separates it from the mainland, and while the southern shore is edged by unceasing surf, its northern border is played upon by the gentle ripples of this bay. Another point discovered was that the undertow, which is the great drawback of many Atlantic watering-places, was absent here. The ocean currents setting from the eastward, and those flowing through the Narrows, meet opposite the eastern end of Coney Island and create a sort of pool, which escapes the suction common elsewhere on the coast. What more could be desired? Where, on the shores of Great Britain, France, or the United States, could the combined excellences lavished by nature on this neglected spot be found? A few friends—gentlemen of influence and of capital—were got together; the New-York and Manhattan Beach Railway

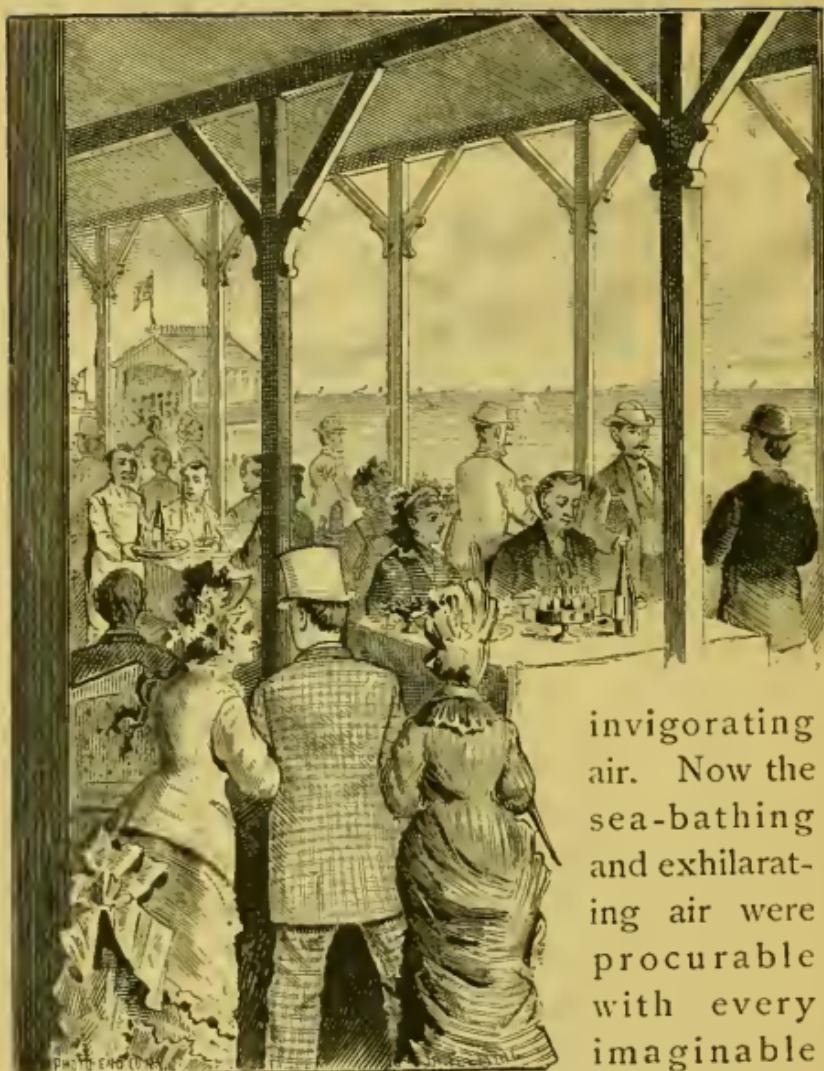
Company was formed; the titles and leases of the ground were bought up, and the active operations begun which have resulted in the brilliant transformation that the eastern half of Coney Island has undergone during the last three years. It was the original design to create a resort which should be eminently select, and from which every objectionable character should be excluded. This design has been steadfastly adhered to, the sole proprietorship of the land which the company possesses enabling it to control the character of its visitors; consequently, at no watering-place is the representation of the best social classes larger than at Manhattan Beach.

One of the earliest and most vital considerations was the means of transportation from the city. No matter how attractive a watering-place might be, it was evident that few would patronize it until it became more accessible than the east half of Coney Island was in 1874. The journey by horse-car through Brooklyn took too much time; a resident of New-York living above Twenty-third street could not by this route, in connection with the railway from Greenwood, reach the island in less than two hours, and the same length of time was consumed by the return trip. It was seen that a convenient, quick and agreeable

transportation was as essential as a superb *cuisine* or a luxurious hotel. A railway extended from Bay Ridge toward Jamaica, Long Island, which was secured and diverted from a point near Deerfoot Park to the beach. Connections with the city were made at Bay Ridge by a fine line of steamers, and by this route passengers living above Twenty-third street were landed at the island within an hour of their departure from their homes, and those living farther down town were landed in a still shorter time. A second line was extended through East New-York to Greenpoint, by which the residents of the city could reach the island in thirty-five minutes. The depot at Greenpoint was on the East River, and connected with Tenth and Twenty-third street ferries. By the latter "all rail" route the island is now brought within less than an hour's distance to the up-town residents of New-York, and a gentleman leaving Madison Square at five in the afternoon can be back by eleven o'clock, after dining and spending four hours by the sea-side. The whole line of double track was laid with steel rails; rolling stock of the best description was purchased, and thirty thousand passengers could be carried to and fro daily, without inconvenience or danger. The equipment included air-brakes, parlor cars,

and every other feature which could possibly increase the comfort of passengers.

The hotel was built, and in the summer of 1877 this new watering-place was opened to the public, and at once became the fashion; neither Newport nor Long Branch attracted more brilliant throngs. In the summer of 1878 the accommodations were extended, and they are now increased again for the summer of 1879. The place was considered such a boon that many notable citizens, in no way interested in it pecuniarily, publicly commended it, among others the president of the Board of Education of New-York City, who, in an address to the pupils of the Normal College, described Manhattan Beach as the most attractive resort he had ever visited. The newspapers devoted columns of description to it, and the people recognized that for the first time New-York had acquired a *practicable* sea-side resort,—practicable in the sense of combined accessibility, economy, comfort and decorum. What a revelation and a blessing the beach became to the thousands whose business compelled them to reside in the city during midsummer, we need not say. Formerly, as we have seen, a trip to Coney Island meant tedium and execrable fare, compensated for in a measure by the sea-bathing and the



Scene on Hotel Piazza.

invigorating air. Now the sea-bathing and exhilarating air were procurable with every imaginable auxiliary for

the promotion of comfort.

Landing on the beach the visitor found a splendid hotel, with spacious piazzas, magnificent halls, luxurious apartments, and a restaurant in which both the *cuisine* and the service

were of the highest excellence. He found unique bathing-houses and a superb beach, unin invaded by troublesome side-shows and hucksters' stands. After a bath and a dinner, he resigned himself to a bliss as complete as mortal may expect to attain. A wondrously beautiful light fell on the ocean, and the distant heights of the Neversink became a purple tinged with gold. The ships seemed still and spectral ; the night came up in a heavy blue, and there was solace in the rhythmic beat of the waves. In front of the balcony on which he rested, a fine band played, and the music was indescribably softened by the contiguity of the water. A crowd of promenaders surged through the halls and piazzas. There were animation, variety, brilliancy, and at the same time the communicative repose and exhilaration of the sea. We have only described the mood of an hour. There were other times in the day when the water twinkled with myriad diamond-points of reflected sunshine, and the East was belted with a delicate violet haze ; when the lower bay was dotted with the white sails of yachts, and the foliage of the Highlands was visible in a dark blue-green, and when the beach was crowded with ladies, children and nurses. Again, there were the morning hours, soft, hazy, cool, and the moonlight nights,

luminous, tranquil and silent. In every mood and phase, Manhattan Beach was charming ; the selectness designed for it by its projectors was maintained, and no element of permanent success was lacking.

Let us change the tense. Manhattan Beach is an accomplished fact, a splendid achievement ; but it is progressive, and the attractions that we have enumerated as being offered to the visitor last summer are supplemented this season by others. An extensive addition has been made to the hotel ; the accommodations for bathing have been increased, and more space has been given to excursionists who come provided with their own luncheons. It is, perhaps, a criterion of the character and resources of the hotel that two of the most exclusive and prominent clubs in New-York, the Union and the Union League, have selected it for a sea-beach branch, and have rented suites of the largest rooms permanently. There are two large restaurants in the main building, besides dining accommodations on the piazzas. There are also many private dining-rooms, and a visitor may see nearly four hundred tables, with at least four seats to each, occupied at the same time. The pavilion for excursionists has seats for one thousand five hundred people, and has a culinary capac-

ity for five thousand persons a day. The kitchen in the main building has all the requisites for providing for ten thousand a day, and in several instances twenty thousand visitors have been dined with complete satisfaction to themselves. One part of the pavilion is devoted to fish dinners, which are prepared by a special cook, and another part is reserved for the gratuitous use of the excursionists. There are several hundred bedrooms of ample size, and the hotel is furnished in all departments after the fashionable Eastlake style. The floors are of oiled woods, and there is no veneer or meretricious decoration. The fresh water is obtained from a well on the mainland, and is almost chemically pure. The beach is patrolled by detectives and special policemen, whose vigilance leads to the prompt ejection of any disorderly characters who have smuggled themselves on to the grounds. But above all other arrangements are those for bathing, which, we venture to affirm, are infinitely superior to those at any other watering-place, not excepting Brighton, Scarborough, Ramsgate, or Margate, England; Trouville, France; or Long Branch, Newport or Cape May in the United States. The bathing-house has a frontage of five hundred and twenty feet, and comprises sixteen hundred and

fifty dressing-rooms for gentlemen, and six hundred rooms for ladies. All these rooms are constructed of the best hard wood, tastefully painted inside and out, and all are supplied with running water and gas. The gentlemen's pavilion is a three-story structure, measuring eighty-four by one hundred and thirty feet;



Bathing Pavilion.

the ladies' pavilion is of the same height, and measures eighty-four by forty-five feet. Between the two is a spacious amphitheatre, with seats for two thousand persons, who are thus afforded a view of the bathers and the ocean. Concerts are given in the amphitheatre daily,

and the beach in front is reserved exclusively for bathers, who, in entering the water and emerging, are thus protected from the intrusion of spectators. The laundry is the most wonderful laundry ever heard of. In the old times at Coney Island, if a visitor wanted to bathe, he was provided with a suit that was still wet from previous use, with towels in a clammy state of moisture, and with a toilet-room of unplaned boards. Ladies were compelled to use rooms next to those of offensive men, whose conversation could be distinctly overheard. At Manhattan Beach, the toilet accommodations for the sexes are separated as we have seen, and each bathing-suit is thoroughly washed and dried before it is loaned to a second person. There are twenty thousand towels and twelve thousand suits, and the laundry has facilities for washing two thousand suits an hour. Two endless belts convey wet clothes from the bath-rooms to the laundry, and pneumatic tubes are used to convey the clothes, when they are washed and dried, from the laundry to the distributing department. A pump with an engine of sixty horse-power supplies the bath-rooms with six hundred gallons a minute; two Marvin safes are provided for the deposit of valuables during the bath; an electric light enables bathing to be contin-

ued after dark, and life-guardsmen in boats patrol the water to prevent accidents.

"Anything more?"

"Yes, my dear sir," we say to the reader; "a great deal more: notably, the hot and cold salt-water baths in the buildings." If perfect privacy is desired, or if the sea-water at its natural temperature is too severe, the person so inclined may enjoy in-doors a bath heated to any degree that suits him. "It seems like a superfluity for a physician to recommend sea-bathing," says Dr. Wm. A. Hammond, the eminent neurologist, "but if there are any who doubt its advantages, to the overworked New-Yorker especially, I am perfectly willing to give whatever weight my statement may have to the assurance, that if there is any better hygienic power than the air and sea of Manhattan Beach, I do not know what it is." Dr. Hammond is undoubtedly correct. Twenty minutes or half an hour in the surf at Manhattan Beach is better than a dozen doses of the most potent elixir of life ever concocted. You land at the beach, say at three in the afternoon, and when you have cooled yourself under the piazzas you enter one of the dressing-rooms and disrobe; then you roll in the surf for a while, and dress; then saunter along the shore, with

a breeze fanning you that is cool in the extremest dog-days. Finally you dine and light a cigar, and no Eastern potentate can appreciate the meaning of superlative luxury as well as you at this moment.

A narrow-gauge railway extends along the margin of the beach for most of its length, and by it steam transportation is afforded to the



Eastern End of the Island.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CO. H.E.

eastern extremity of the island, where old-fashioned clam-roasts are served, and where sail and row boats may be hired for use on the quiet waters of the bay or outside the bar. Another attraction is the captive balloon, similar to that of the recent Paris Exposition, by which visitors can ascend in the care of an experienced aéronaut to a height which gives

them an idea of life in the clouds, and at the same time discloses a wide and beautiful reach of sea and land.

Pyrotechnic displays of a novelty and grandeur hitherto unknown in America will be presented at intervals during the season by the "Alexandra Exhibition Company"; an inclosure of several acres, convenient to the hotel, has been secured for the purpose, and the company propose to repeat their wonderful exhibitions which have become so famous at the Alexandra and Crystal Palace Company's grounds in London.

A little to the east of the hotel is one of the life-saving stations of the United States, which, though it is unoccupied from May until November, is well worth inspection. During the winter months the beach is patrolled by the surf-men of the station every night. Each patrolman carries a beach lantern and a red Coston hand-light, and on the discovery of a vessel in distress he burns the latter, both to alarm his companions at the station and to give notice to those on the wreck that succor is near.

Let us suppose that it is a wild December night, with a blustering, poignant North-easter blowing. A big fire is blazing in the station-house, and four of the men, with the keeper, are taking their ease around it, or lying in their

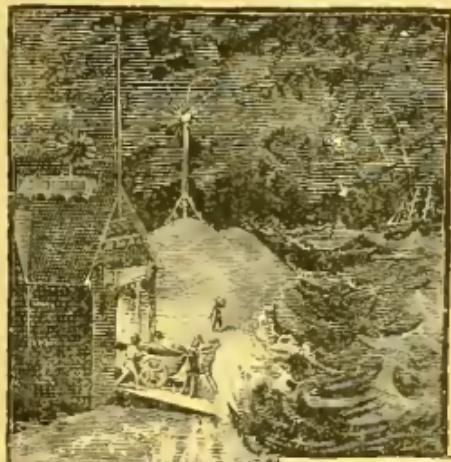
bunks, while the two others are putting on their coats and mufflers, and looking longingly toward the hearth. The latter are going out on patrol, and as they are human they delay as much as possible, re-adjusting their dress, pressing their pilot-caps over their heads, pulling their gloves farther on, and giving their neck-cloths a final twist. The duty is inexorable, and, with a last glance at the fire, they plunge into the outer night. The wind is full of needle-points and cuts them like a knife, and the darkness blinds them for a moment, and extends in every direction, except around their feet, over which the lanterns cast a ring of white light, and in the window of the station, which glows with warmth. Above the moaning of the air is the loud beat of the sea, as the waves break on the shore and recede with a sibilant sound, and the spray is lifted and driven in-shore by the wind in feathery streaks. The big hotel of Manhattan Beach, which in summer is illuminated from basement to roof, the handsome pavilions, the piazzas and promenades, are utterly dark and deserted. Not a sign of human life is visible. The two patrolmen say "good-night" and separate; one looks back to see the lantern of the other swinging to and fro on the sands, and decreasing in brilliancy until it is altogether lost behind a

low ridge of sand, and he then feels absolutely alone amid an unreal silence that would not be as awful were the wind and sea completely still. The walk would have many terrors for a nervous or superstitious man, or for any one of sensitive organization; and the patrolman is superstitious; but he is so familiar with the darkness, the loneliness and the roar that he treads along the beach in a reverie—not a reverie on the deep secrets over which Nature is brooding, but on so prosaic a matter as the care of a small family who are now fast asleep on the mainland—until he fancies he discovers a light fastened to the black wall that seems to be built up from the sea. He stands still, and looks for it again; it has disappeared. In a minute it re-appears; and now the first light, that has stood at the mast-head of a vessel in distress, is augmented by the flare of a rocket and the blue fire of a signal, which reveal a schooner close in-shore and in extreme peril.

According to his instructions, the patrolman instantly ignites his red light, which is done by striking the holder against his knee, which action explodes a percussion cap, and he is surrounded for several seconds by a flood of crimson so vivid and so vigorous that no wind or rain is strong enough to extinguish it. When the light expires he hastens back to the

station with the news, and that quiet outpost is suddenly put into as tumultuous a state as the storm outside. The life-boat is placed on a carriage, the carriage having very broad tires

to its wheels, so that they cannot sink in the loose sand, and the life-car, with other apparatus, is placed in another vehicle, both being drawn to the



LIFE SAVING STATION.

point nearest the wreck, where efforts are made to obtain communica-

tion with it. There are three possible means of communication—the life-boat, the life-car and the life-raft. The first two are in use at all stations, and the last has been adopted at a



THE PATROL. ANDREW TOWN

few, but it is only under very favorable circumstances, or in extremities, that the boat is used. A line is thrown over the wreck either by a rocket or a mortar and shell, several efforts being made before success is attained, and the first line is attached to a stronger one that is secured to the mast of the vessel and to the shore. The life-car is suspended from the line and hauled on board the distressed ship; three or four persons are put inside it, and it is hauled back again, repeating the journey until all are safely landed. But the work, as is the case with most things, is easier to describe than to perform. If the wind is blowing on shore, rocket after rocket flies on its meteor-like course through the tempest, falling short, or being carried too far ahead or astern by the wind; sometimes the rocket fails altogether, and the boat or life-raft is the only resource left.

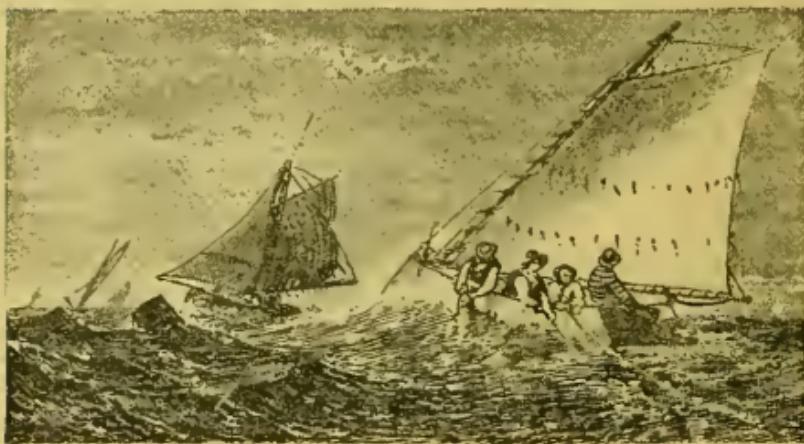
The life-raft resembles a covered boat with a few air-holes in the top, the perforations having raised edges to prevent the water from entering, and it has a ring at each end, with a hawser attached, that enables it to be drawn through the surf. The "boatswain's chair" and the "breeches buoy" are similar, though older and less efficacious devices.

Having seen the patrolman's red light burn-

ing, the crew of the wrecked ship utter a glad cry of deliverance and wait for the brilliant spurt of the rocket bearing the line to them. At the end of the line is a board with messages in several languages, and if they are understood, communication is soon established with the shore.

The visitor to Manhattan Beach—in the winter season—may sometimes see the coast-wreckers at work on some vessel which has stranded or sunk, and may witness the exceedingly interesting operation of raising a large ship. The mode of operation, in brief, is as follows: three or more heavy cables are lowered to the bottom of the sea and dragged under the hull, by divers; when these are properly adjusted, huge wooden pontoons are towed over the wreck, and the cables are passed up through water-tight well-holes and then drawn upward by hydraulic power. This part of the work costs severe effort and much time, but when it is done, the injured vessel, as a doctor would say, is in a fair way to recovery. The cables are drawn up through the wells, link by link, and are gradually tightened, until the wreck lifts. It rises slowly, and the pontoons groan from the weight bearing upon them. For some time yet the wreck is out of sight, but at last the deck is seen dimly

through the waves, and soon afterward it is above water. Then the cargo has to be removed in whole or in part; the divers are sent down to discover the leaks, and, when discovered, to patch them with canvas and thin planking. Then steam pumps, of enor-



Engraving by C. A. T.

Blue-Fishing.

mous capacity, quickly clear the vessel of water, and she is towed to a dry dock for repairs.

The mackerel and blue-fishing off Manhattan Beach is exceedingly good, and this suggests another means of recreation within reach of the visitor. Let him form a party of good fellows, who are "never, never, or hardly ever, sick at sea," and bring them down to the beach in the evening. After dinner, let him saunter in the lovely evening light, when the shore is looking

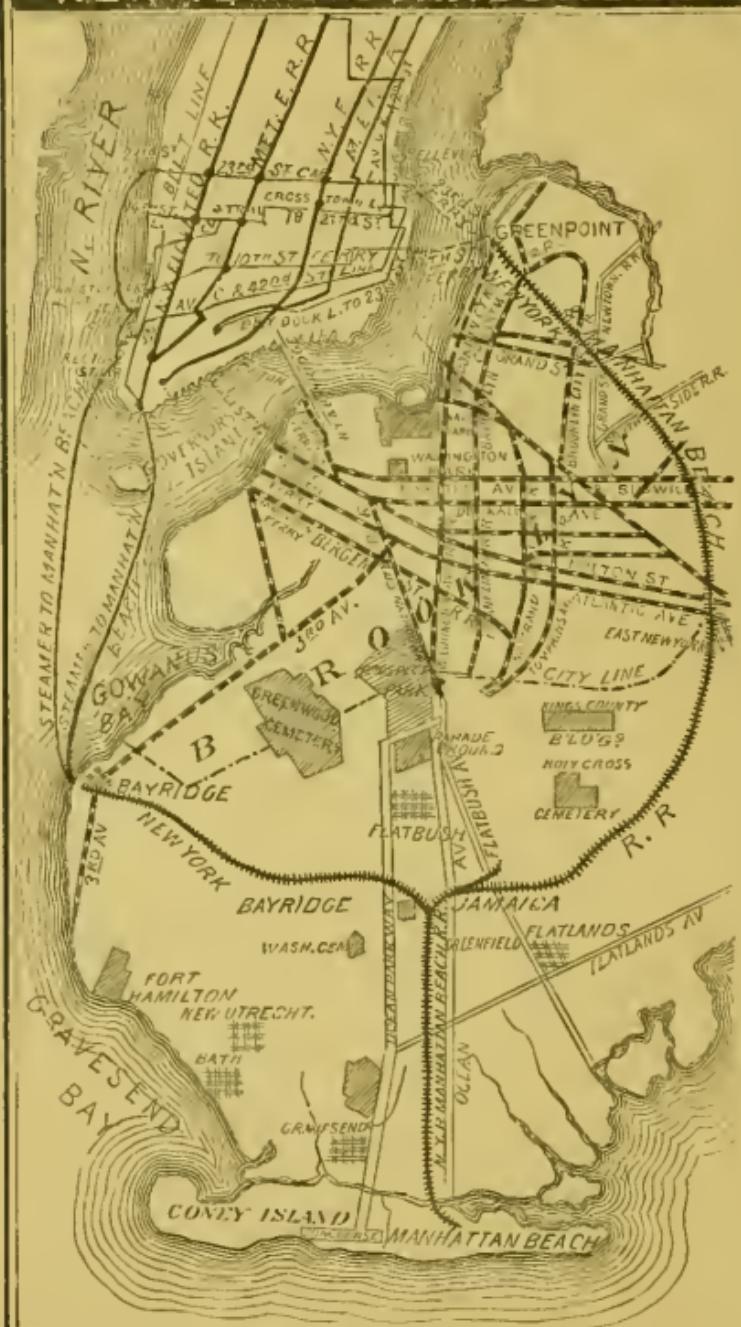
its prettiest, as far as the eastern end of the island, and engage a man and a boat for the morning; let him retire early, and when the sun is mounting the eastern sky, suffusing the little world in view with rose-color and gold, making a ruby wine of the dark waters, --let him embark and cross the bar. The waves are crisp, glassy and fringed with foam; as they leap into peaks the light flashes through them and shows how green they are; but a surface-glow lies upon them, and shifts about, appearing and disappearing, and losing intensity of color as the sun rises higher. The wake of the little boat, as she dances over the undulations, sparkles and bubbles as with millions of diamonds, and the sea exhales a communicative vitality which soon puts the party in the highest possible condition of exuberance. With the lines trolling astern, it is not long before you have some fish shining and prismatic in the bottom of the boat, and when you have exhausted the sport you recross the bar, and land. The probabilities are that your appetite will not allow you to bathe before breakfast, and, seated under the piazza of the hotel, with the sea-breeze playing around you, you consult the *menu*. The table is spread with snowy linen and sparkles with crystal ware; the *garçon* is civil and intelligent. What

shall we order? Some grapes or peaches to begin with, certainly; then some half-shell clams with a bottle of Chablis; then a *filet* of sole, *sauce tartare*; or, do you not like smelts, breaded, with dry toast and a cup of fragrant Mocha? The fish-cook of the Manhattan Beach hotel develops unsuspected delicacy of flavor in his dishes; and while you are discussing the *filet* of sole with *sauce tartare*, or the breaded smelts, an ever-changing animated throng of promenaders enlivens the beach, and hundreds of bathers in the water divert you and seem to become rhythmic in their motions responsively to the strains of the band. Looking beyond the surf, an unbroken fleet of vessels are coming and going by the great ship channel,—perhaps two or three of the Leviathans of modern ocean steamship lines,—and you become emulous of the power of the marine painter to transfer some of this beauty to canvas.

We have scarcely left ourselves sufficient space to describe the various routes to Manhattan Beach, each of which has some interesting features. The pleasantest, no doubt, for the stranger, is by steamer to Bay Ridge, and thence by rail. The boats are of the finest class,—large, swift, and handsomely fitted up. The North River landings are at West Twenty-

second street, Le Roy street, Pier Eight (foot of Rector street), and the Battery. The Twenty-second street landing is easily reached by cars which traverse Twenty-third street and connect with all other lines in the city; it is about seven minutes distant from Madison square. The Le Roy street landing is passed by the Belt line cars, and is within two or three blocks of the Houston street cars. It is also the terminus of the Hoboken ferry, the Blue line of cars running through Fourteenth street, Union square and Seventeenth street to East Twenty-third street, the White cars running through Eighth street across town, and the Cream-colored cars running through Fourteenth street to Union square. Passengers living as far up-town as Central Park may, by taking the Metropolitan Elevated Road to Eighth street, and the street cars thence to Christopher street, reach the landing within twenty minutes, and the beach within seventy minutes, while previous to the opening of the Bay Ridge route, the same trip would have occupied two hours and a half. The Rector street landing is within a few minutes' walk of Wall street and of all that portion of the city below City Hall Park. The landing at the Battery—foot of Whitehall street—is made by a special boat, connecting

MANHATTAN BEACH R.R. & NEW YORK CONNECTIONS



with both elevated roads, and is the shortest water route to the beach.

The varied traffic of the river, the activities of the wharves and the beauties of the upper bay combine to make the sail to Bay Ridge one of the most attractive in the world. The Hudson washes thirteen miles of the city's shore line, every foot of which is available for vessels of the largest tonnage, and the upper bay has fourteen square miles of anchorage. Over two-thirds of all the duties collected on imports in the United States are paid through New-York, and while the total value of all exports from this country is about \$682,000,000 annually, the total value of those from New-York alone is nearly \$345,000,000 of this amount. Nearly 6,000 vessels, measuring 5,000,000 tons, come into the harbor every year from foreign ports, besides about 2,500 vessels engaged in the coastwise trade. The water is plowed in every direction by all kinds of vessels, and the air is resonant with the vehement whistling of the steamers. Squat, turtle-like ferry-boats, black with passengers; palatial river-steamers with tier above tier of state-rooms; capacious barges; cockle-shell row-boats; solid-looking dredging machines; coasting steamers and full-rigged ships—not

only those which are common to all harbors, but many varieties of less familiar appearance, churn the water into foam and dodge each other so dexterously that the collision which seems inevitable is constantly averted. The stranger strains his eyes and his understanding in a vain endeavor to discover the nature of two heavy barges, which are fitted with railway tracks, and from which the cars are transferred to another track in the city. A further illustration of this characteristically American expedient may be seen in the "Maryland," a Leviathan railway ferry-boat, that forges her way daily from the Harlem River to Jersey City, bearing a whole train of passenger cars a distance of over eight miles, and forming an all-rail route from Boston and the East to Philadelphia and the South.

Another strange-looking craft is the floating derrick of the Dock Department; and stranger still are the grain elevators, which look like houses afloat. The roofs and the straggling water-front, with its embattlements of sail-lofts and stores; the long fringe of shipping, with its forests of masts and black net-work of cordage, are all that we can see of the city from the river, but the reverberations of its noisy heart-beatings come to the ear in low

surges, and mingle with the lapping and splash of the water. The cerulean overhead is not perceptibly dimmed by the filmy smoke of the anthracite coal, which is the common fuel, and the water, though it is not the deep blue and green of the sea, is still green compared with the water of Liverpool, London, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The picturesqueness of the harbor is attested by the frequency with which it is selected for illustration by the best American painters.

The stranger is impressed with the apparent inconsistency in the names of the North and East rivers. The North, which is the Hudson, appears to be so named after the point of the compass from which it flows, while the direction of the East River, which borders the city on the eastern side, seems never to have been taken into consideration in its nomenclature. The fact is, however, that the North River was so named by the early Dutch, to distinguish it from the Delaware, which was called the South River.

Near the Twenty-second street landing of the Manhattan Beach steamers, on the North River, we see the immense grain warehouses, built for the use of the New-York Central Railway, where the grain is transferred in

bulk from the cars which have brought it from the West to large ocean steamers for conveyance to Europe; and in the same vicinity is the handsome building known as Manhattan Market, which is now used for other purposes than those for which it was intended. Between the Le Roy street landing and Canal street are clustered the wharves of the principal transatlantic lines,—the Cunard, White Star, Inman, Guion, National, Anchor, State and French lines, and a representative steamer of each is usually in dock. Probably no other port in the world harbors in the same concentrated space as many superb vessels. It is not unusual to see eight steamers here at one time measuring nearly forty thousand tons, and aggregating about four million dollars in value. The view is imposing in the extreme.

Below Canal street, the various Southern steamers are seen at their piers,—steamers for Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, Galveston, Bermuda and Mexico, besides the sumptuous vessels used in navigating the Sound and the Hudson. Now and then a glimpse is caught of the Brooklyn Bridge towers, and the many commercial palaces on Broadway loom up magnificently. The circu-

lar structure in the Battery Park is Castle Garden, where the newly arrived immigrant is landed and cared for. He is taken from the ship by tenders into the vast rotunda, where all his reasonable wants are supplied. His biography is tabulated in a voluminous register; should he become sick within a certain time after his arrival, the Commissioners of Emigration are bound to admit him to their hospital; should his ultimate destination be beyond the city, responsible agents of railway companies are on hand to supply him with tickets at the lowest rate; his thalers, sovereigns or napoleons are exchanged for United States currency; means of communication with absent friends are opened to him, and, in brief, everything possible is done to protect him from swindlers and help him on his way.

As we leave the South Ferry landing, the vista of the East River is opened to us with hundreds of magnificent barques, schooners, brigs and sloops at the wharves. A little to the east are the docks which receive the immense freight of the Erie Canal. The principal lines of transportation from the West to the East include about ten thousand miles of railway, seven thousand miles of river, sixteen hundred miles of lake, and sixteen hundred

miles of canal. The total freight carried over them in a year is about ten million tons, one-fourth of which comes through the Erie Canal and down the Hudson River, whence it is delivered near the Battery landing of the Manhattan Beach boats. Four ferries and two elevated roads converge in the same locality—two of the ferries from Staten Island, and two from Brooklyn.

Our steamer now heads down the bay, with Governor's Island on one side and Bedloe's Island on the other. The low green line of the Long Island shore toward Bay Ridge and the heights of Staten Island are seen in the distance. Governor's Island was the site of the first settlement in New-York, and has had a varied and eventful history; it was a perquisite of the British governors "in the good old colony times when we lived under a king," and hence its present name; but it was previously known as Nutten Island, from the number and excellence of the nuts which grew upon it. It was also the first place of quarantine in New-York, and was captured by Admiral Howe as he moved his fleet up the bay after the battle of Long Island. Two batteries of artillery now occupy it, and it is the head-quarters of the general commanding

the Department of the Atlantic. The smaller island to the westward is Bedloe's, which is also fortified, and this is the proposed site of the colossal statue of Liberty. A strong, exhilarating breeze blows in upon us from the sea, and the water falls in crisp spray over the bow. In a few minutes we are landed at Bay Ridge, where the Manhattan Beach Railway Company has erected a splendid pier, depot and waiting-rooms, and where the passengers are quickly transferred to the trains in waiting for them. The view from the pier is very beautiful. The bay reaches out toward the Jersey coast and the Kill Von Kull, and the Long Island shore is a vivid green to the water's edge. We have already spoken of the equipment of the railway, and we may reiterate that it includes every invention that can increase the comfort and safety of those traveling by it. It extends at first in a south-easterly direction, between high embankments and underneath the various avenues, until it emerges into a fertile and picturesque country; then it follows an easterly course, and near Deerfoot Park passes under the fine Ocean Parkway, connects with the Greenpoint branch, and thence extends in a direct southerly line to the rear of the hotel on the beach.

The Greenpoint route is not only a fast and commodious way to the beach in summer, but it also affords one-fourth of Brooklyn rapid transit to business in New-York; it is building up and populating large portions of the eighteenth, twenty-first and twenty-fifth wards in the former city, and it is a convenient means of freight transportation from the East River to the suburbs. The passenger trains in Greenpoint are connected with the city by steamers running from Twenty-third street and Tenth street, where street-cars establish communications with every part of the city. The Twenty-third street (buff line) cars intersect all the avenues and Broadway; the Houston street (yellow line) pass through Lexington avenue to Forty-second street; the Seventeenth street (blue line) reach Union square, and thence go down West Fourteenth street; the Dry Dock line (green) and the Belt line (red) touch nearly all the arterial thoroughfares of the eastern district, and the White line from Tenth street runs directly across the city. The East River, at Tenth and Twenty-third streets is not as variedly picturesque as the North River, but it has many features of interest. The great iron-works are in the neighborhood of the former; and steamers that

are being dismantled lie at the adjacent piers, which are covered with a miscellaneous heap of fragments—the separated sections of marine engines, rusty boiler-plates, battered smoke-stacks, and green copper-sheathings. Not long ago the ruined hulk of the "Ocean Queen" was lying here,—a famous vessel; in the palmy days of the Panama route to California she had been true to her name, but now her broken rigging draggled from the masts and spars; the seams between her timbers gaped, and the paint was peeling off. The two funnels were battered and red with rust. The once cozy little state-rooms on the upper deck, in which the warm tropical winds had fanned the grateful passengers, were dismal, chilly, and destitute of furniture; every bit of gilt and upholstery had been stripped off her once gorgeous saloon; and the engine-room, in which her large heart of fire had burned, was a shadowy, echoing void. Close to her lay the iron-clad "Montauk" in a still more woeful condition of wreck, her thick plates dimpled with the hemispheres of hundreds of cannon-balls which had struck them in the civil war without penetrating them; her decks torn up by shells, and her smoke-stack bent and indented. Side by side with these

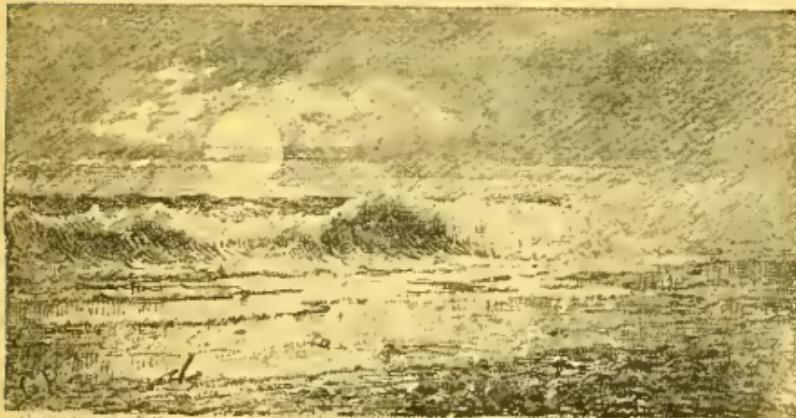
shattered veterans were new white river steamers and larger sea-going steamers, into which engines and boilers were being placed by demon-like mechanics,—mechanics dressed in black and greasy overalls, whose fierce-looking eyes were set in ebon faces, and whose hammers were rained upon the bolts and plates with vindictive energy. Most of the ship-building of the port is done at Greenpoint, and in the yards near the ferry may be seen the skeleton-like frames of future ships and steamers. At the foot of Twenty-sixth street, Bellevue Hospital is conspicuous, and an interesting object at the foot of Twenty-third street is the "St. Mary's," an old war-ship devoted to the education of boys for the American mercantile marine.

In closing this sketch, we recapitulate briefly the various routes to the beach.

The North River route by steamer to Bay Ridge, and thence by rail; the East River route *via* Greenpoint; and the South Ferry route, also by water to Bay Ridge. The North River boats receive passengers at Twenty-second street, Leroy street, and Rector street. All stations of the elevated roads sell tickets for the beach *via* the South Ferry boats. On the East River, ferries at Twenty-third and

Tenth streets connect half-hourly with trains at Greenpoint. It will thus be seen that no watering-place is so accessible to the crowded population of New-York and vicinity as the delightful resort which has been built up at the eastern end of Coney Island.

No more remains for us, kind reader, than to invite you to test the truth of the story we have here given of Manhattan Beach.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 109 360 5



4D

